

Trauma-Informed Programing in Schools



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Why This Really Matters . . .



A **trauma-informed school system** (pre-school – 12th grade) is one in which **all** school administrators, staff, students, families and community members involved with the school recognize and respond to the potentially negative behavioral, relational, and academic impact of traumatic stress on those within the school system including children, caregivers, teachers, and other school staff, as well as on the school as a system.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network



Why This Really Matters . . .



The school system provides trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills as part of **the fabric of the school** organizational culture, practices, and policies and **act in collaboration** with all those who are involved with the child, including students' families, community agencies, leaders, and law enforcement, **using the best available science**, to facilitate and support the recovery and resiliency of the school community.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network



A Trauma-Informed School System



Within a trauma-informed school setting, youth who have experienced trauma are:

- Seen as hurt kids rather than bad kids
- Are held accountable for their actions
- Feel safe within the school setting (emotionally and physically)
- Are identified and triaged into appropriate services
- Are better able to learn once trauma issues have been addressed
- Have decreased behavioral problems as trauma issues are addressed.

Schools are Uniquely Positioned to:

Help students reach their full potential by:

1. Partnering with families and strengthening traumatized children's relationships with adults in and out of school
2. Helping children modulate and self-regulate their emotions and behaviors and
3. Enabling children to reach their academic potential.

Helping Traumatized Kids Learn





Consider



Robert, Ben, and Raul were walking home from high school. A car drove by playing loud music. Ben recognized a gang member in the car who had earlier threatened him. "Let's get out of here!" he said.

Before the boys could get away, the car stopped and four gang members surrounded them. All three boys were **beaten**. Ben's nose was broken, Robert's front teeth were knocked out, and Raul received a black eye and a fractured rib. In the weeks that followed, each had a very different reaction in school.

NCTSN

How Do Hurt Kids Respond?



- Survival states of mind:
 - Hypervigilant
 - Numb
- Survival behaviors
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
 - Surrender
 - Cry for help



Trauma Triggers and Kids

- Seemingly innocuous stimuli provoke extreme survival-motivated responses
- Schools can be full of potential trauma triggers



What Happens Next . . . Robert



Robert became reluctant to attend school. When he went to school, he did not participate in discussions as much as before and was more irritable with his friends and teachers. Previously a conscientious student, Robert began giving excuses for not completing his homework and did poorly on his most recent exam.



Teachers notice he is under-performing

Teachers call Robert out

School staff decide that he has "Lost his motivation"

Robert avoids more, does worse academically

Robert is labeled: Another unmotivated kid who doesn't care about his future



Trauma and Learning



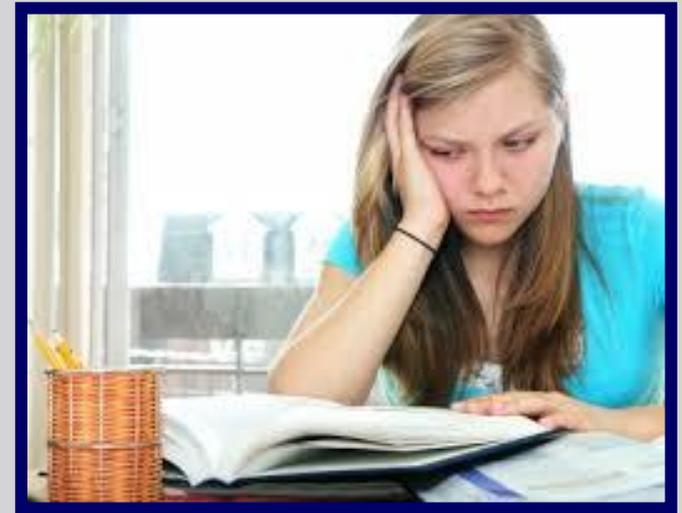
“Instead of **exploring** the world so that we can grow, develop, and engage fully in our lives – using what I’ve called the “learning brain” – the brain of a PTSD victim shifts to hypervigilance and a fight-flight state – a **“survival brain.”**”

Julian Ford

Traumatized youth experience academic difficulties associated with...



- Learning and retrieving new verbal information
- Social and emotional communication
- Problem solving and analysis
- Sequential memory/organization
- Cause-and-effect relationships
- Perspective taking
- Attentiveness to classroom tasks
- Regulating emotions
- Executive functioning
- Academic engagement



What Happens Next . . . Ben



Ben seemed to enjoy the notoriety given him from being jumped, and tended to become more aggressive and outspoken with his peers. In class, Ben expanded his role as class clown, now including the teacher in his sarcastic remarks, for which he was repeatedly sent to the office.



Teachers notice the change in behavior

Reprimanded more often

School staff “give up” because “nothing works with Ben”

Robert acts out more to avoid feeling “small and scared”

Ben is labeled: A bad kid with no future

Trauma and Behavior Problems



- Reactivity and impulsivity
- Aggression
- Defiance
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Regression
- Traumatic reenactment
- Somatic complaints
- Tension reduction behaviors (“MUPS”)



What Happens Next . . . Raul



Raul showed no obvious signs at school following the experience. He continued in the same manner with his friends and in the classroom. His friends noticed that Raul spent more time with his family and, talked to his coaches more often, and started going to his church youth group again.



Teachers notice that Raul is adjusting well

Staff praises Raul for doing well socially and academically

School staff enjoy spending time with Raul

Raul works harder following encouragement from school staff

Raul is labeled: A good kid who is going places



Defining Resilience



“A pattern of being able to positively adapt in past or present adversity”
(Masten, 2001)



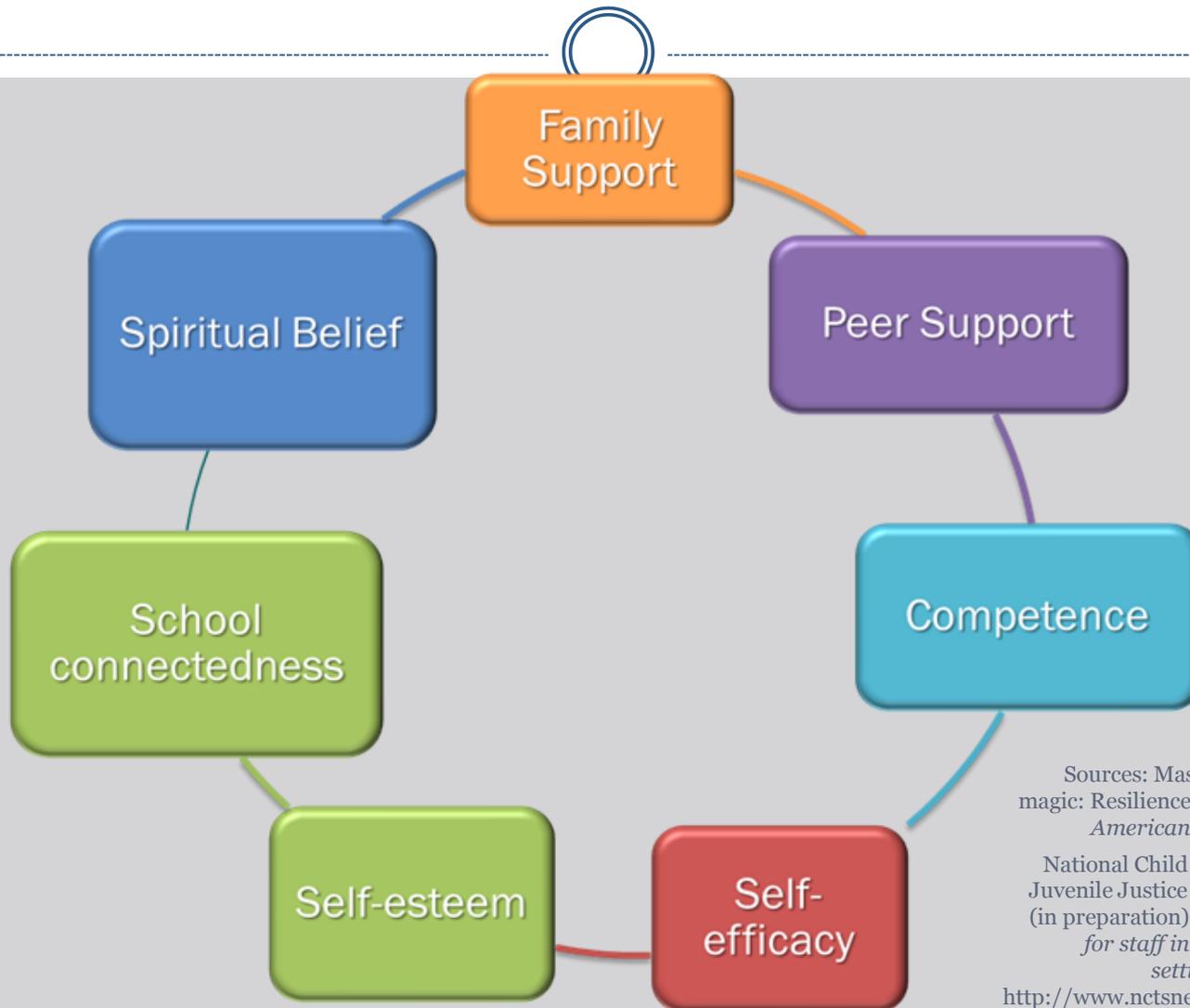
Trauma and Resilience



Key Factors Common to Resilient Children

1. Strong relationship with a adult caregiver/mentor figure
2. Solid ability to regulate emotions and behaviors
3. Sense of competency (e.g., academic achievement)

Factors that Enhance Resilience



Sources: Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Juvenile Justice Treatment Subcommittee. (in preparation). *Think trauma: A training for staff in juvenile justice residential settings*. Will be available from <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/juvenile-justice-system>

Consider Instead

A school response that includes:



**Caring
Counselor**



**Talented
Teacher**



**Savvy
Social
Worker**

Trained School
Staff

- Collaboratively monitor Robert, Ben, and Raul
- Recognize the trauma responses and triggers
- Help the youth communicate their needs to building staff
- Link youth to community services to address those needs
- Partner with the families as needed

Consider Instead



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Robert is relabeled: A Hurt Kid



Ben is relabeled: A Hurt Kid

**A trauma lens in schools = learning increases
and behavior problems decrease**

Trauma-Informed Programming in Schools



WE NEED YOUR HELP!





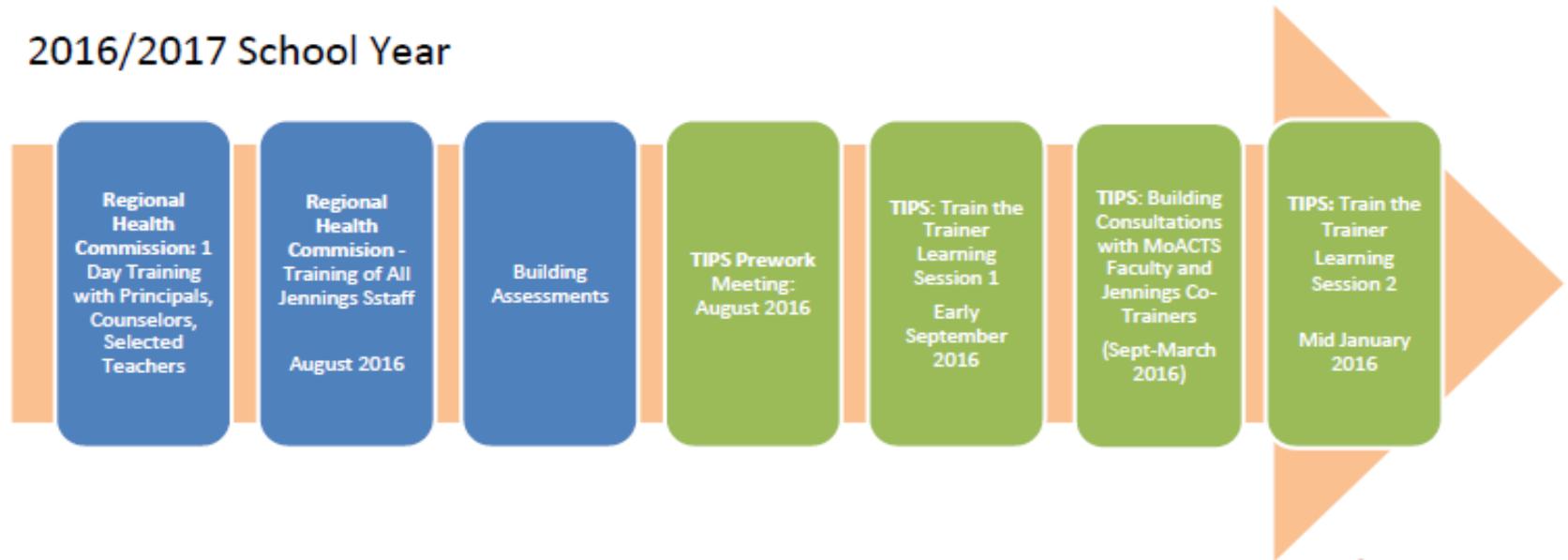
TIPS Mission



TIPS mission: The mission of the TIPS program is to assist schools as they seek to **infuse trauma informed practices** within their school environment. This includes interactions between students and staff, policies, approaches to discipline, and **how staff think** about the students within their building. The TIPS program recognizes that it is incredibly challenging work to support youth impacted by trauma and seeks to **assist educators** being as prepared as possible, personally and professionally.

Jennings School District Trauma Informed Programing for Schools (TIPS)

2016/2017 School Year



2017-2018 School Year:

- Jennings TIPS trainers facilitate the Building Consultations for the District
- TIPS trainers have consultation with MoACTS faculty

Jennings Trauma Informed Programing in Schools (TIPS) – Building Consultation Training Topics

Recognizing and Preventing Trauma Triggers within the School Environment	Discussion of the differences between internal, external, and interpersonal trauma triggers. Practice identifying these triggers with youth in their building, developing strategies and goals within the building for preventing triggering situations.
TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSES WITH TRIGGERED STUDENTS	Strategies to respond to crises within the school from a trauma-informed lens, role-play scenarios for staff to practice de-escalation techniques, strategies for “debriefing” following these incidents in order to help prevent future situations.
Physical and Psychological Safety within the School Environment	A brief overview of challenges related to physical and psychological safety within the school environment. Practice using a trauma-informed safety plan for the school environment, practice sending signals of care rather than signals of threat to youth.
The Impact of Trauma on the Brain and Learning	A brief overview of the difference between typical brain development and brain development for youth impacted by trauma. Group activities related to how altered brain development due to trauma impacts learning and behaviors within the classroom.
Engaging with Challenging Caregivers	A brief overview of the inter-generational cycles of trauma. Strategies for engaging with challenging caregivers who may be mistrustful of the educational system, reducing caregiver anxiety, and building a collaborative relationship with caregivers.
Self-Care for Caring Adults	This session will provide an overview of the challenges associated with self-care that arise in those working with youth impacted by trauma. Direct practice of and concrete strategies related to mindfulness and self-care will be discussed.
Trauma Informed Classroom Management	This session would teach building Staff a collaborative-problem solving approach to addressing classroom management issues and would involve Staff learning and practicing skills to help create a more positive and relaxed classroom environment.
Trauma Informed Classroom Procedures and Practices	This session would teach building Staff a collaborative-problem solving approach to addressing classroom structures that help create a more positive, relaxed classroom environment and trauma informed classroom.

TRAINING EXAMPLE





INTRODUCTION TO TIPS + TRIGGER IDENTIFICATION



Talking Points:

- **Hurt kids not bad kids** → kids are still responsible, we have to think differently about them.
- Responding to children in a trauma-sensitive manner is the responsibility of **ALL** building staff.
- We are not asking everyone to be “therapists”
- You can never be trigger-free in a school context

Activities:

- Trigger Identification
- Practice talking to students about triggers
- Case consultation as needed

Panel Discussion

